


# Via

Are you ready?





Reading through the articles in this volume of Via, we hope that you will be able to clearly see that you are at the centre of God's attention. He loves you with a powerful love! God loves you so much that He sent His Son to be your Substitute. We have all sinned and sin earns the penalty of death. God is absolutely fair but He is going to judge sin. Because He is also a God of mercy, He has presented a way of escape. God provided the Saviour, His Son, who came between us who are guilty and God who demands justice. He provided the way of escape from sin. The Lord Jesus took the punishment for our offenses so that we could live free from sin's control. No matter what you may have done, He can liberate you – even from your addictions. He wants to be your Lord and Saviour!

The article "Sheep" helps us to picture the Lord Jesus as a caring and loving Shepherd. He is seeking for you. Once you call out to the Shepherd, He will bring you into His fold and never let you go! There is no peace like the peace we know when we are right with God. Eternity is real – are you ready?

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*All the Bible quotations in these articles are from the New King James version.*

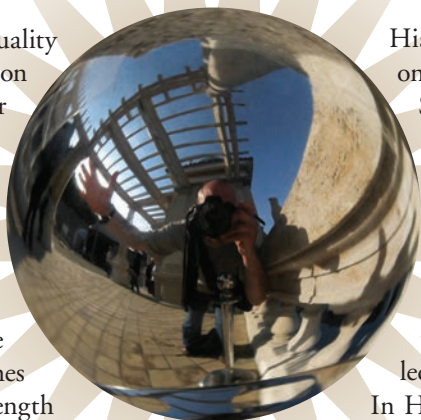
# Centre of Attention

*Make no mistake, you are at the centre of God's attention.*

A remarkable quality about our reflection in a spherical mirror is that, no matter where the mirror might be placed, our eyes will always be in the dead centre of the mirror. Whether we hold the ball inches away or at arm's length makes no difference. There is no escaping being at the centre of a spherical mirror when looking into it.

Just as you remain at the centre of a spherical mirror, so you remain at the centre of God's attention, whether you are an atheist or a believer. God knows everything about you and sees all you do. He knows all this as if only you exist and all His infinite power is directed toward you.

As humans, we possess the ability to concentrate on only a few objects at a time, but our infinite God is not limited by time or space. He perfectly knows all things at all times. There is no place where you can hide from His sight. You can't disappear into a crowd. No darkness is thick enough to block out His vision.



His love is also focused on you. He sent His Son into the world to show the greatness of that love. In His life, the Lord Jesus glorified God by His perfect obedience which eventually led Him to the cross.

In His death, He made a way for sinners to be saved from eternal punishment. *"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). The same immense love that brought the Lord Jesus to the cross is now seeking out sinners to bring them to Himself. The way to enter into God's favour forever is open to everyone because the blood shed on Calvary has the power to wash away every stain of sin the repentant sinner may have. *"The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7).

Since He knows you so well, there is no sense in trying to pretend that you are not a sinner. It is probably true that you have done many good things in your life — acts of kindness, keeping

the law, paying your taxes on time, loving your family, or many other acts that are praiseworthy — but the truth is that your heart has not been right before God. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart”* (Jeremiah 17:9-10). The undeniable truth is that you are far from perfect; you have committed sin and are marked by God as a sinner. The God who sees all and knows all has said very clearly in His Word, *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

Because we are sinners, we all desperately need the Saviour. Through His work on the cross, the Lord Jesus has obtained the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life for all who turn to Him in faith. Once you are saved, He wants you to learn more of His love and live as His precious child. Make no mistake, you are at the centre of God’s attention. This same God, who knows all about you, wants you to come to Christ and to receive His wonderful gift of eternal life — eternal love.

Can you refuse His love and continue to live as if God were far off and Christ never died for you? Or will you turn to the God who loves you and gave His Son for you?

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Bible Truth Publishers



## Connected – But Alone?

“Can anybody hear me?” “Is anyone really listening?” “Is there anyone I can talk to?” Have you asked any of these? They’re such frustrating questions. With the world-wide popularity of cell phones and the internet, the world has never been more connected — but at the same time, we can feel very alone. When life gets hard, it suddenly doesn’t matter how many friends we have on Facebook, how much money we have, or how full our social calendar is. We need more than a distant acquaintance. We need a real friend; someone we can trust and who truly cares about us. We need someone who will take the time to listen to us.

In the Bible, in the book of Psalms, a man named David wrote, *“This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles”* (Psalm 34:6). When he was overwhelmed with the troubles in his life, he knew where he could go. He went to the Lord, to the God of the universe.

*Continued on next page.*

## *Connected - But Alone? continued*

The truth is, all of us have a problem. Even if your life seems to be going smoothly at the moment, each of us has a problem of sin. We have broken God's perfect law, so He cannot allow us into Heaven (Romans 3:23). But almost two thousand years ago, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, died in our place, for our sins (Isaiah 53:5). Three days later, He rose from the dead, and is alive today! (Romans 6:9-10) So He is able to hear us if we ask Him to forgive us for our sins. The Bible says the Lord Jesus is the only one who can give us forgiveness and eternal life (Acts 4:12).

So, who does the Lord Jesus hear? One of the wonderful things about Him is that His ears are always open. He is always listening for those who cry out to Him. In the Bible, we read of many people who cried out to the Lord Jesus for help. And every time, He heard them. It didn't matter who they were or what they needed, He always stopped and listened. We have a wonderful promise in the Bible, that *"whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10:13). No matter what you've done, He wants to save you, and give you a new life. Have you called out to the Lord Jesus? He's listening for your call.

There are many people, and you may be one of them, who believe that life should be one never-ending party; friends to meet, places to go, things to get and do, seeking constant amusement in the pursuit of happiness, needing non-stop activity to fill the emptiness inside, to fight the boredom that surrounds them. Drugs, alcohol, immoral relationships, money and music are some of the most popular choices in this party called life. We don't want to think about the fact that the party will end.

However, there is an enemy to all this pleasure-seeking excitement. It is death. We all have an appointment with death and eternity. You have a God-given eternal soul and the Bible makes it clear that you will spend eternity somewhere when the party is over. Where you will be in eternity may not matter to you right now. The thought of facing a sin-hating, holy God or talk of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, are subjects you probably avoid at all costs. The Lord is trying to reach you now, because once your "party" is over it will be too late.

We see in the Bible that we are all unclean in God's sight because of our sins. You may not think that you are a Hell-deserving sinner, but God is holy and He hates sin. Sin will keep you from being with God in Heaven for eternity unless you receive God's forgiveness for sin which is found only in His Son, Jesus Christ. God's word reveals that if you die in an unclean





# WHEN THE PARTY IS OVER...

*"It is appointed for men to die once,  
but after this the judgment"* (Hebrews 9:27).

and unforgiven state, because of your own choice, you'll go to Hell with all the other people who refused God's mercy. You may think, "That's okay - all my party friends will be there as well!" Yes, sadly they will be there too if they also reject Christ, but the thick blackness of "*outer darkness*" (Matthew 25:30) will separate you from each other. It is a place of torment, never-ending fear and punishment and you will be there on your own.

Right now you are without God in this world and have no hope, but in Christ Jesus you, who are far off, can be brought near by the blood of Christ; He can be your peace. You can know that when you die (and you will die) you will be in Heaven.

Take a moment, please consider and understand God's love for you in giving His Son, the wonderful Lord Jesus Christ to die for your sin on the cross of Calvary and then three days later to rise again from the dead. He can be your Saviour. You must call upon the name of the Lord, acknowledging and turning from your sins and trusting Him, and only Him, to save you. That's when the real celebration will begin!

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

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[www.wordsbythewayside.co.uk](http://www.wordsbythewayside.co.uk)

The image shows a vertical wooden post, possibly a weather vane or a marker, with a thick, light-colored rope or twine wrapped around it in a loose, coiled fashion. The rope has frayed ends that hang down. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape under a sunset or sunrise sky, with warm orange and yellow tones near the horizon transitioning into a pale blue at the top. The title 'The Substitute' is overlaid on the image in a large, white, serif font. 'The' is smaller and positioned to the left of 'Substitute', which is larger and more prominent.

# The Substitute

I watched a video of a beautiful horse named Daisy. Her back legs were trapped as she had somehow fallen into a well. She was helpless and without strength to get herself out of the pit she was in. If it wasn't for a backhoe and a skilled operator, Daisy would have died.

I thought about this story for a long time. I was like that horse. I was in a pit. You may know you are like that too. We need something bigger than ourselves to save us and put us on solid ground again. God loves you and wants to operate in your life just like that backhoe operated in the life of Daisy the horse. He is *"...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9).

It is amazing that God continually shows His mercy and kindness to us even though we deserve His justice for

our rebellion towards Him. One lie, one act of hate, one lustful thought—the list goes on and on for the ways that we sin against God. But if we had a book in front of us that showed us all the times that God stepped in and blessed us when we didn't deserve it, or when He preserved us from danger, or when He helped us, we would be amazed! We would understand that He really does love us and is thinking of our eternal comfort.

God wants us to come to Him in faith, laying down our weakness, our guilt and shame at His feet. He is *"the Father of mercies and God of all comfort"* (2 Corinthians 1:3). Anything else or anyone else is imperfect and cannot give the peace, comfort and forgiveness that we really need.

There is a story about a particular Aboriginal tribe that was suffering from the effects of a severe drought.



Food was scarce and the members of the tribe were beginning to steal from each other in order to survive. The chief knew that this would be the death of the tribe, so he issued a law that the next person caught stealing would be taken to the centre of the village, tied to a pole and publicly whipped.

The next day, sure enough a thief was caught. Everyone came to see who it was and to witness the punishment. To the shock of the tribe, the thief turned out to be the chief's own mother. What was he going to do? He was a good chief, and could not justly ignore the law he had made. He had to keep his word.

But, this was his mom and he loved her. She was old and frail so the beating could very well kill her. How could he cause her to suffer?

What do you think he should do? Which should win: his love or his justice?

The chief ordered that her wrists be tied to the pole so the beating could begin. He called the man responsible for administering the punishment to step forward, whip in hand. But, before he gave the order for the lashings to begin, he stepped between his mom and the man. He stretched his strong frame across her frail back and with her body completely protected underneath his own, he ordered that the punishment begin.

As the cords of the whip fell, they fell on him. He absorbed the brunt of

her penalty. In that act, he was both just, in carrying out the penalty, and loving, by suffering it himself.

That is what Jesus did for us. We are guilty of breaking His laws, and we know it. The Bible is clear that sin earns a penalty. The penalty of death must be paid. But it is also clear that God loves us. He provided a Saviour for us.

So here's what the Saviour did. He came to earth, became a perfect Man and went to the cross for you and for me. When Jesus was being crucified, He was stepping between us who are

*When Jesus was being crucified, He was stepping between us who are guilty and God who demands justice.*

guilty and God who demands justice. He absorbed the blows of that punishment so that we wouldn't have to take them ourselves. Jesus died and rose again. He was victorious over death, so that we could escape God's punishment and live lives free from the control of sin and the judgment sin deserves.

May God help each of us to consider His great love and to accept His life-changing gift of salvation through His Son, today! We don't know if we have tomorrow. When Christ is our Saviour, nothing can "separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).

# Searching for Light in Dense Darkness: Kim Phuc's Testimony



*Kim Phuc had no peace in her life and endured so much misery she wished she could just disappear or be dead, so her suffering – mentally, physically or emotionally, would be over. Given what she had been through, she was quite sure life would never be normal and she'd never be loved. Perhaps you know someone who is plagued by similar thoughts; maybe even your own mind has gone down such dark alleys.*

## Young Life Falls Apart

She was only nine years old when her life was shattered. With the war raging between North and South Vietnam, her family had fled to the Cao Dai temple for shelter. A soldier warned the villagers that planes would bomb the temple and that they should all run. Nine year old Kim ran outside as the bomber plane was quickly descending toward the town.

Four napalm bombs had been dropped – a flammable liquid that clings to human skin and burns with intense heat. She was on fire. Her left arm was burning as she tore off all her burning clothes.

## The Photographer and Photographer

Nick Ut, a 21 year old Associated Press photographer was covering the war. Out of the dark billowing smoke, Kim and other children ran and instinctively he took pictures. The young journalist said parts of Kim's skin were falling off. Crying over the horrific sight of the burning young girl, he put his camera down. He rushed her to a little hospital.



## Slow Recovery and an Uncertain Future

Fourteen months and seventeen surgeries later, Kim was able to leave the hospital. But her life wouldn't be easy. Pain and extreme headaches would afflict her every day and under the new government regime, drugs and treatment were very expensive. She committed herself to studying and school work, and focused on her goal of becoming a doctor. She was accepted into medical school but life was about to change again.

The photograph that Nick Ut had taken had become famous (Pulitzer

Prize) and the Vietnamese government decided to capitalize on the famous picture by turning Kim Phuc into a National War Symbol. She was forced to leave school to become a representative for her government.

### **Hating Life and Wanting to Die**

Not surprisingly, Kim was bitter, angry, and unhappy and felt totally empty and lost.

Before we go any further with this story, how is your life? Have you found the answers to the big questions or are you still searching?

Kim was searching for answers to her emotional pain. Living with her sister in Saigon, she started visiting the library on a spiritual search. On one of those visits, Kim came across the Bible and she started to read it.

### **Finding the Truth**

In the New Testament she read about Jesus and His story resonated in her heart. She quickly concluded that He was unlike any other person she had ever heard about. Her search became more focused and her thirst to know Christ became more intense.

### **Finding Forgiveness and Peace**

She personally received Jesus as her Saviour at age 19. Having experienced God's forgiveness of her own sins the moment she received Christ as her Saviour, Kim, as a new Christian, asked God to help her to forgive others and to move on in her life.

In an interview with CNN she said: "And from that point, I learned

to forgive." The CNN journalist said: "Now Phuc radiates an unmistakable poise and peace when she tells her story. She says she sees that famous picture as just one of many blessings."

### **Today and Forever**

Today Kim and her husband live near Toronto, Ontario in Canada where they raised their two boys. Yes, she has met many people since she was that badly burned, naked and screaming nine year old girl running down Route 1, the supply road between Saigon and Phnom Penh. She has mingled with royalty, prime ministers and presidents but the meeting that changed her life and brought her lasting peace and inner joy was her encounter by faith with the Lord Jesus Christ in Saigon, Vietnam as a young adult.

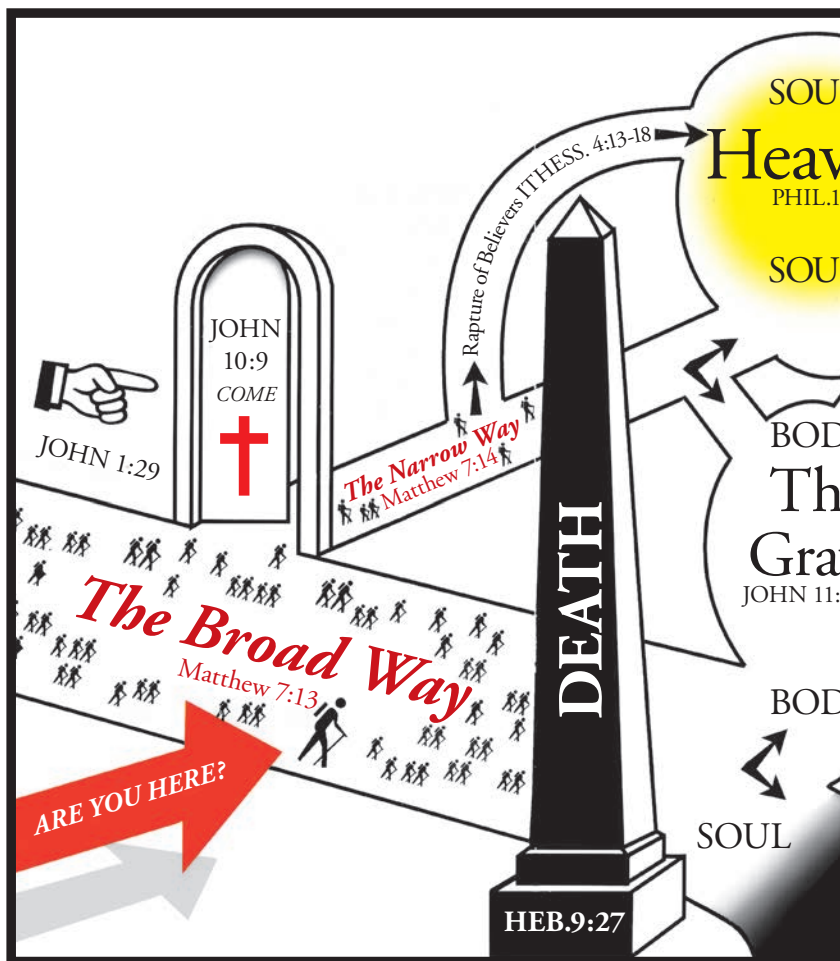
What about you? Have you found peace and joy? Have you appreciated that God loves you and that Christ died for your sins? Are you a possessor of eternal life? Do you have the wonderful relationship with God through Christ of which Kim spoke?

*"You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."* (Jeremiah 29:13)

*"I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness."* (John 12:46)

*"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16)

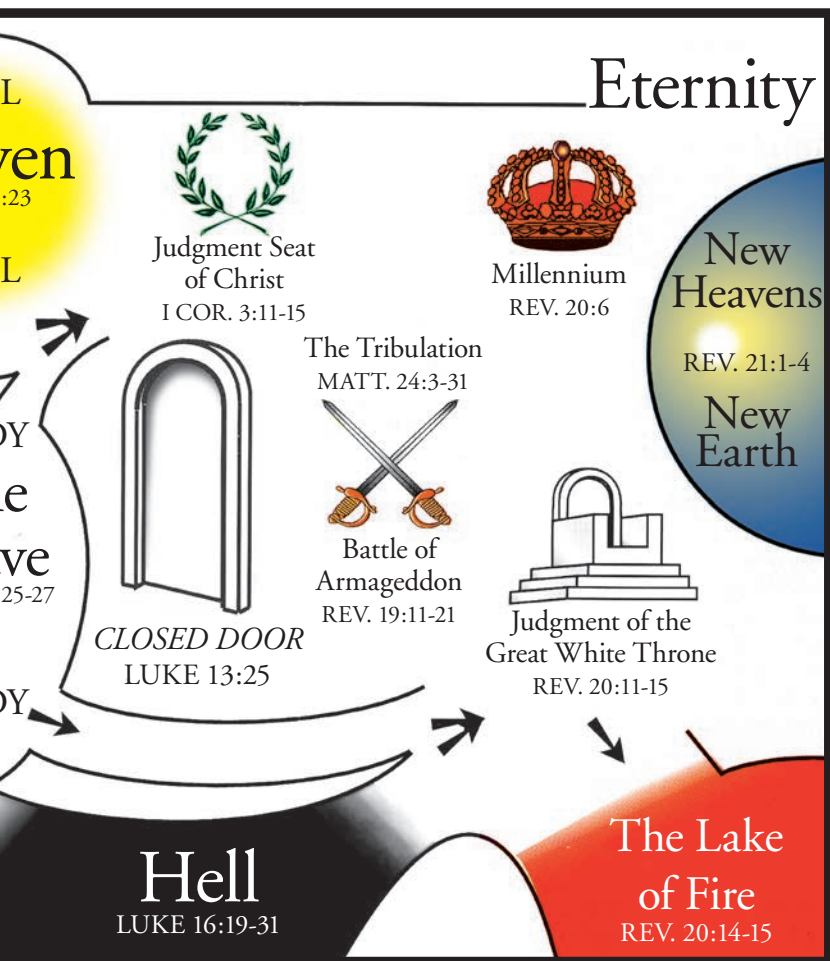
# TWO ROADS AND TWO DESTINIES



This chart depicts the two roads referred to in Matthew 7:13-14: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate...which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” We are all on either the **Broad Way** or the **Narrow Way** - there is no middle path. Death crosses both the Broad

and Narrow Way. The bodies of both believers (those who have accepted Christ as Saviour) and unbelievers (those who have not received Christ) go to the **Grave**. The believer’s soul goes to **Heaven**; the soul of the unbeliever to **Hell**. The **Rapture**, when Christ returns to the air and “catches up” all living believers, could happen at any time. When this takes place, the bodies

# TINIES CHART



and souls of those believers who have already died will be reunited to stand before the **Judgment Seat of Christ**, where their lives will be evaluated and rewarded. Then begins a seven-year period called the **Tribulation** in which judgment occurs on the earth, culminating in the **Battle of Armageddon**. The Tribulation will be followed by the **Millennium**, when Christ will reign

on the earth for 1,000 years. At the end of this period, the bodies of unbelievers will be resurrected and reunited with their souls to stand at the **Judgment of the Great White Throne**, and then cast into the **Lake of Fire** for eternal punishment. **New Heavens** and a **New Earth** will then be created which will last for eternity. **On which road are you?**



## Children's Feature

### You've Got Mail Message from Space

**H**ave you ever sent an e-mail to another planet? Or have you perhaps text-messaged someone in the next galaxy? Sound odd? Well, that's what a group of astronomers have been attempting to do for more than 40 years!

Their idea first took to the sky in 1973. In that year, the Pioneer 10 space probe made history. It became the first object from the earth to travel beyond the boundary of our solar system. In doing so, it also became the first e-mail in space because riveted to its side is a metal "attachment" sent from scientists on planet earth. It is a drawing of a man and a woman (the man is waving "hello"), a star map describing the location of our solar system, and a diagram which shows that we humans live on the third planet from the sun.

In the event that Pioneer's message gets lost, two other spacecraft, Voyager 1 and 2, have also since left our solar system with their own attachments. Each carries onboard a special holder containing video disks. Recorded on the disks are messages from some world leaders. To show what Earth is like, there is music from several countries and pictures from all corners of our globe. These disks were nicknamed "Earth's Greatest Hits".

When God created the vast masterpiece in our night sky, He sent us a message that is received on earth 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It reaches every address.

The planets and stars all speak about God's power and presence; but many people do not want to be accountable to their Creator. It's like they don't want to know Him. Instead, they are busy looking for something else.

How about you? Do you know that God has sent a message to you? That message says, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16). God loves you so much that He sent the Lord Jesus to die on the cross to take the punishment for your sins. Trust Him and you will receive everlasting life.

*"The gospel of Christ, ... is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes"* (Romans 1:16). This is the greatest message that has ever been sent!





# Teen Talk

## *You Are Sensible*

It's late afternoon when you hear the doorbell ring. A glance through the window in the front door sends a surge of adrenaline through your whole body, sweat breaks out on your forehead and your pulse jumps involuntarily. You saw his picture all over the news. The tattoos match, the car behind him running in the driveway matches, and the face is unmistakable. The news says he's armed, dangerous and a most wanted killer. Would it be "intolerant" of the killer's viewpoint to leave your door dead-bolted while you speed-dial the police?

We are taught to be tolerant of different viewpoints, cultures and races. Basic thoughtfulness and loving-kindness is what God teaches as well. However, somehow in all the sensible sensitivity, there is the mixed-up notion that right and wrong don't exist. Truth is taught as though it depends on the situation. Each person can set their own code of conduct and sincerely live by it. No one else can judge them, stop them, or disagree with them without being considered "intolerant."

But, God doesn't present the truth He has given in His Word, the Bible, as a helpful set of suggestions to make our lives go easier and to make society happier. He doesn't present sin and salvation as "options to consider." He doesn't chat with the killer at the door. He condemns him! *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). We have committed the monstrous injustice and ingratitude of guiding ourselves by our own selfish and sinful lusts. God has every right to exclude us forever from His presence. *"There shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie"* (Revelation 21:27). Neither you nor I can deny having lied when it served our purposes. That means we have no right to God's home in Heaven.

However, God also deeply loves every one of us. He is *"not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). He couldn't possibly allow us to enjoy time with Him while we refuse to repent of our sin, so He has provided a way of escape from sin. *"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him"* (Romans 5:8-9). Carefully consider the following words of both love and uncompromising firmness: *"God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"* (John 3:17-18). This is truth. Be sensible!



**I**t happened in Florida. A young man and his partner-in-crime planned a night of mischief, crime and burglaries. He had shared his intentions, of breaking into a number of homes in the bay area, with his girlfriend earlier in the evening.

Neighbours spotted two suspicious men behind their homes and called the emergency services. Police, a service dog and a helicopter were dispatched that night to hunt down the suspects. The young man called his girlfriend to tell her the police were on his trail. But the search produced nothing. He successfully hid from the law and the police called off the search. When he didn't return home that night, his parents called the police to report him missing.

Ten days later the body of the 22 year old man was discovered floating in the same crime-spree neighborhood

pond. Very close to the remains of the young man was an alligator – so ferocious that it had to be euthanized. It appears the young criminal jumped into the pond to hide from the police and the service dog. Tragically he not only lost a number of his limbs to the 11 ft. gator, but he also lost his life. What seemed to be a safe hiding place from the authorities turned out to be a disaster.

### **Are there spiritual lessons to be learned from this story?**

1. We commit offenses and sins against God. In fact, if every one of our secrets were exposed on social media for the world to see, we would go into deep hiding and never want to show our face again. But where would you hide?

2. Spiritually, God is the Authority and the Judge. Our first line of

accountability for any and all of our sins is to God. He cannot be bribed or manipulated. If we think our friends would be shocked, disappointed and disgusted, have you ever thought of God's feelings about our sins? His standards are much higher and holier than those of our friends and neighbours.

3. Sinners do their best to hide from God. Some are in denial about His existence – as if that would alter the reality of their accountability. Others hide their sin by a camouflage of good works. They feel better and safer but it is a total deception. Good deeds do absolutely nothing to offset our wrongs. Hiding behind such a cover is no safer than jumping into a gator-infested pond. The ultimate end will be spiritually tragic.

4. Unlike with local police and other authorities, your tracks never go cold and God never loses your scent. In fact, your entire life is totally exposed and transparent to His holy, all-seeing eyes. Hiding from God is futile. You cannot escape. He is observing you right at this moment.

5. What is uniquely beautiful about God is His love for you and every other sinner. Lovingly and graciously, God provided a way for you to safely turn yourself in and to stop hiding. When God sent His one and only Son, Jesus, down to this world, He sent Him on a mission of mercy to provide a righteous way for sinners

to find a safe refuge from the punishment for their sins.

6. Jesus Christ actually endured and experienced the penalty of sin on the cross. He was innocent. We are guilty. The Bible says: "*Christ died for the ungodly*" (Romans 5:6) and "Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

7. If you will come clean about your sins when you pray to God, and turn to Jesus Christ as your Saviour, Shelter and Refuge – you will be safe. Outside of Christ, you have no safe hiding place.

When you surrender to Christ and accept Him as your personal Saviour – you are safe and secure in this life and forever. There is no danger of you ever becoming unsheltered and exposed again to the judgment of God. You will be safe and secure in Christ.

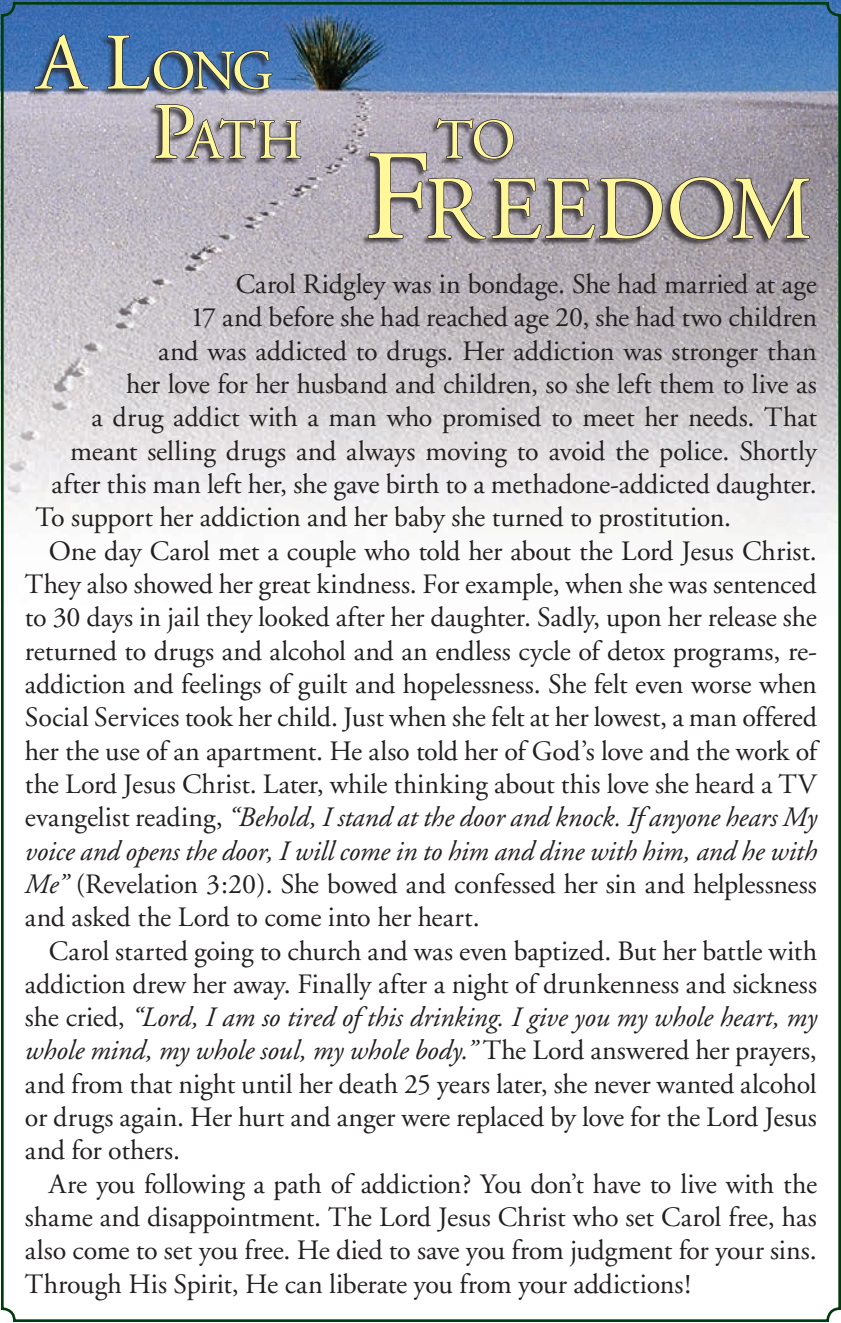
Here are some beautiful Bible verses about God as a shelter and refuge – for those who have a relationship with Him:

*"You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.*  
(Psalm 32:7)

*"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.'*  
(Psalm 91:1-2)

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# A LONG PATH TO FREEDOM

Carol Ridgley was in bondage. She had married at age 17 and before she had reached age 20, she had two children and was addicted to drugs. Her addiction was stronger than her love for her husband and children, so she left them to live as a drug addict with a man who promised to meet her needs. That meant selling drugs and always moving to avoid the police. Shortly after this man left her, she gave birth to a methadone-addicted daughter. To support her addiction and her baby she turned to prostitution.

One day Carol met a couple who told her about the Lord Jesus Christ. They also showed her great kindness. For example, when she was sentenced to 30 days in jail they looked after her daughter. Sadly, upon her release she returned to drugs and alcohol and an endless cycle of detox programs, re-addiction and feelings of guilt and hopelessness. She felt even worse when Social Services took her child. Just when she felt at her lowest, a man offered her the use of an apartment. He also told her of God's love and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Later, while thinking about this love she heard a TV evangelist reading, *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me"* (Revelation 3:20). She bowed and confessed her sin and helplessness and asked the Lord to come into her heart.

Carol started going to church and was even baptized. But her battle with addiction drew her away. Finally after a night of drunkenness and sickness she cried, *"Lord, I am so tired of this drinking. I give you my whole heart, my whole mind, my whole soul, my whole body."* The Lord answered her prayers, and from that night until her death 25 years later, she never wanted alcohol or drugs again. Her hurt and anger were replaced by love for the Lord Jesus and for others.

Are you following a path of addiction? You don't have to live with the shame and disappointment. The Lord Jesus Christ who set Carol free, has also come to set you free. He died to save you from judgment for your sins. Through His Spirit, He can liberate you from your addictions!



While working as an agricultural mechanic, I enjoyed watching the changes brought by the maturing of crops in the fields.

Once the ground started warming in the spring, the farmer's thoughts would turn to planting seeds in the fields. Often, when there were problems with the seeding equipment, the urgency to get it repaired was fairly low. As long as the seed could be in the ground within a day or two everything was okay.

As the crop grew, it would require attention. Possibly an application of insecticide or herbicide would be added to control hindrances to the crop's growth and maturity. If the chemical is applied at just the correct stage of growth, it will be the most effective.

When the crop is fully mature, it is very critical that it is harvested immediately. If it is not harvested at the correct stage, the crop will not be worth as much when it is sold. There will be less profit for the producer.

This reminds me of the human race. When we are born into this world does not determine how we will leave this world. We start out to make our mark here like the seed that is planted. There

is, *"a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted"* (Ecclesiastes 3:2).

As life progresses, we make various decisions that will affect our well-being. We decide where to go to school, which job to apply for, and whether or not we abuse our bodies with various harmful substances. These decisions and many more will impact our lives for better or for worse.

When it comes to the end of life, like the harvest, the effects of our decisions will be seen. If we made the decision to focus on ourselves and leave God out completely, He will have no choice but to ensure we spend eternity completely separate from Him. Make your decision to trust the Lord Jesus before it is too late.

Hebrews 9:27 tells us, *"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment"*. By accepting the payment made by the Lord Jesus at Calvary's cross, you will never see that judgment. You will spend eternity with a loving God in Heaven. May you never have to say these words,

*"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!"* (Jeremiah 8:20).

# Harvest Time



# Like sheep?



**A**re sheep sheepish? Are they stupid? Top marks if you answered no to both of these questions. Sheep are remarkable creatures – and we human beings are very much like them, as you’ll learn from the Bible.

## All in together!



Sheep like to be together. The Bible pictures a shepherd with his flock gathered around him.

The sheep know his voice, he knows their names, and he feeds and watches over them. The Lord Jesus drew a parallel with Himself as the Good Shepherd in John chapter 10.

In contrast, what we see in New Zealand are great mobs of sheep being mustered and driven by a farmer and his dogs. There is much whistling by the farmer, barking by dogs, and bleating of confused sheep. That is what it’s like to go with this world’s crowds. People, as well, like to be together, to belong, and the great enemy Satan

knows that. He keeps them rounded up, as it were, chasing the latest trend or event, trying to maintain “connectivity” through the social media. But it’s a restless, often lonely togetherness with no certain outcome.

That is not God’s way! Make sure you trust the Good Shepherd and know the contentment and security of being in His flock. He calls, *“Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). You can enjoy the green pastures and still waters of the much-loved Psalm 23.

## Follow the leader!



Sheep need a leader, and readily follow one another. It just takes one sheep – any sheep – to go in a direction and the rest will follow. A farmer knows this well. When he needs to load a flock of sheep onto a truck to go to the slaughterhouse, he will get one sheep to take



the first steps up the ramp. I was told once that he calls it the “Judas sheep”. (Remember Judas, who betrayed Jesus to be crucified?) It leads the others - to their death. What a lesson! Be careful whom you follow! Beware of Satan’s traitors - “Judas sheep” - who will deceive you, whether through false religion or the occult or other evils. Inevitably, such will drag you down to eternal destruction.

In contrast, listen to the loving call of the Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd. He said, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish”* (John 10:27-28). He will lead you right into Heaven.

### Lost!



A sheep strays so easily. Just a step or two, to get those nice tufts of grass, or to see what’s on the other side of the hedge. Suddenly, the sheep is on its own, in danger from predators, afraid, and with absolutely no instinct for finding its way back. How like the sinner. *“All we like sheep have gone astray,”* (Isaiah 53:6). Have you found out that you are lost? The Bible teaches that you

*Have you found out that  
you are lost?*

have sinned against a holy God, and are in danger of His wrath. You can’t find your own way to the salvation you desperately need. There is good news: the Good Shepherd seeks for

you. Jesus told of the shepherd who looked for and found the one lost sheep, and carried it joyfully home on his shoulders. Read about it in Luke 15 – it will warm your heart.

### Down!



Even in a flock, a sheep can meet disaster. I’ve seen a flock in a field seemingly happily grazing. But one of their number is down, or “cast”. This happened because it rolled a little as it sat down, overbalanced, and went right over. And there it is on its back, a pathetic sight, helpless, frantically kicking its legs. The sad thing is that it will perish unless someone finds it and sets it on its feet again. This is a picture of what sin will do to you: leave you cast down, without hope, and alone. Could it be that you are in the grip of an addiction, or a victim of abuse or violence, vainly trying and trying, like the kicking sheep, to get free? There is hope! Call on the Shepherd. His Word promises, *“Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:13).

Think of the love of the Lord Jesus. He died on the cross to save you. He says, *“I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep”* (John 10:11). Why would you persist in your lonely struggle? Let Him lift you up, set you on your feet, bring you into His fold, and never let you go.

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L M Thompson

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